

Introduction

Civic Voice is the national charity representing 75,000 civic volunteers across England. The civic society movement is made up of 500 volunteer led groups across the country. The oldest civic society dates back to 1846 with new civic societies being created all the time.

The Government, through the Localism Act has been committed to “*radically reform the planning system to give neighbourhoods far more ability to determine the shape of the places in which their inhabitants live*”. As the organisation with the most active participants in the planning system Civic Voice has welcomed this ambition. Civic Voice believe that real community participation, through early, inclusive, collaborative methods, must be supported and embedded at all tiers of planning to generate a common sense of ownership and deliver high quality places.

We are calling for changes in three areas to give communities a greater say over what happens in their area:-

Collaborative Planning

Civic Voice is calling on all MPs to support the seven core values as International Association for Public Participation to ensure communities can have a greater say over developments in their area:

Ask your MP, do they support:-

- Public participation being based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process
- Public participation includes the promise that the public’s contribution will influence the decision
- Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers
- Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision
- Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate
- Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way
- And crucially, effective public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the end decision

Does your MP support these 7 principles to ensure people can share development where they live?

Community Right of Appeal

- An alliance between the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), Civic Voice and the National Association of Local Councils is joining together in calling for all political parties to make a firm manifesto commitment to introducing a “Community Right of Appeal” into the planning system.
- As organisations, we are aware of the growth agenda and the need for more homes to be built, in fact our members want new development.... but only where they have been able to influence the final outcome and that it is of a high enough quality.
- We do not want to see a Community Right of Appeal introduced on all applications. It would be time limited and only apply to certain development.
- We believe a community right of appeal can be good for democracy. It could (for example) be triggered only where a decision to grant a planning permission is not in line with an already adopted local plan or neighbourhood plan or where the local authority itself has a particular interest in the application and so could be construed as conflicted in its ability properly to determine the application.



Civic Voice Briefing

Does your MP believe that a limited Community Right of Appeal should be introduced to the planning system?

Changes to Asset of Community Value Legislation

Civic Voice was pleased to submit written and oral evidence to the Select Committee on the success of community rights legislation. We were delighted that the Committee decided to accept all of the views of the civic society movement and agrees with our recommendations that:-

- 🗨️ The time given to communities to prepare bids for buying assets should be extended from six to nine months;
- 🗨️ The Government should consult on removing permitted development rights from all Assets of Community Value for the duration of their listing;
- 🗨️ The Government should amend its guidance so that an Asset of Community Value listing becomes a material consideration for local authorities in planning applications;
- 🗨️ The Government should redirect resources to community group umbrella organisations who provide face to face support;
- 🗨️ A nominator's right to appeal against a local authority's decision not to list an asset as an Asset of Community Value should be introduced.

We are now calling on the Government to implement these changes. Government has so far refused to do so.

Does your MP support these changes?

All Party Parliamentary Group for Civic Societies

- 🗨️ The All Party Parliamentary Group for Civic Societies was launched in the House of Commons on 1st November 2011 and over 76 MPs are signed up.
- 🗨️ The group until recently was chaired by Laura Sandys MP.
- 🗨️ Previous events have featured Eric Pickles, Brandon Lewis, Nick Boles, Robert Goodwill and Stephen Williams.

Would your MP be willing to be a member of the APPG for Civic Societies?

Summary

We warmly welcomed the fundamental intention behind the Localism Act when it was proposed to deliver a "power shift" to local communities. We do not feel it has gone far enough. We are calling for Real Localism and to move away from communities having things "done to them" to a situation where communities can have a real voice in shaping where they live.

Contact

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